

Ribbon cutting celebrates DNREC's opening of new state-of-the-art boat ramp at Holts Landing State Park



State Representative Ron Gray, State Senator Gerald Hocker, DNREC Division of Parks & Recreation Director Ray Bivens and DNREC Secretary David Small at the ribbon cutting for the new boat ramp at Holts Landing State Park.
(DNREC photo: Jennifer Fitzsimmons)

MILLVILLE –This afternoon, DNREC Secretary David Small and Division of Parks & Recreation Director Ray Bivens were joined by State Senator Gerald Hocker, State Representative Ron Gray, staff from three DNREC Divisions including Fish & Wildlife and Watershed Stewardship, Parks Friends groups and members of the community to cut the ribbon opening a new state-of-the-art dual boat ramp at Holts Landing State Park in Millville. The new ramp provides greatly improved amenities and ease-of-service that will boost recreational opportunities and tourism at the park.

"Storms have repeatedly taken their toll on this locally popular launch site, but the beautiful boat ramp we put into use today will not only repair years of damage, but is expected to double its capacity and improve navigational access through the investment of approximately \$775,000 in improvements," said DNREC Secretary Small. "I'm certain this upgrade will be a welcome and much-used facility by the growing community in this area."

The removal and replacement of the previous boat ramp took place over the winter to make way for the new dual launch boat ramp with an ADA-accessible floating dock. The newly-constructed ramp will provide 24-hour access for watercraft enthusiasts. Unlike its predecessor, the ramp allows two users to simultaneously launch their vessels into the bay. To improve navigational boating access, DNREC's Shoreline & Waterway Management Section dredged material from the boat ramp into Indian River Bay, creating a channel 60 feet wide by 4 feet deep that will accommodate boats up to 25 feet in length.

"It's wonderful to be here on Earth Day to celebrate the completion of this innovative boat ramp, the largest project ever undertaken at Holts Landing State Park," said Division of Parks & Recreation Director Bivens. "Thanks to the support of our state legislators, DNREC Divisions, Friends groups and the community the new handicap-accessible ramp and floating dock will be available to anglers and the boating public as we begin a new season."

State Senator Gerald Hocker, (R-Ocean View), secured \$300,000 in FY2014 state bond bill appropriations that supported the improvements at Holts Landing State Park. "I want to recognize the Friends of Holts Landing State Park and their spirit and energy, in coordinating all of the special events that take place in this beautiful park. This is the first of many more improvements to come, including those that will improve the area's trail system," said Sen. Hocker.

"I am thrilled to be able to participate in this event today," said State Representative Ron Gray, (R-Selbyville), who has worked extensively with the Friends of Holts Landing State Park to bring the project to fruition. "The crews that worked on getting this new boat ramp installed in a timely fashion for our boaters and recreational users should be commended. I also believe the dredging that has been completed to date will again give boaters access to Indian River Bay from Holts Landing. This is a good day for our boating community."

DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation took the lead on the design, permitting and construction of the new ramp, with the assistance of Andrews, Miller & Associates, a consulting firm from Easton, Md. The Division of Fish & Wildlife provided technical assistance, planning for the ramp and assisted with repairs to the original ramp. Construction was completed by MADCORP of Dover.

Holts Landing State Park is considered a "hidden gem" in Delaware's state parks system. The 203-acre area contains a variety of beautiful landscapes, from Indian River Bayshore beach to grassy fields and hardwood forests. Historically, the shores of the Inland Bays were home to Native Americans, who harvested seafood and hunted in the surrounding marshes and forests. After European settlers arrived, agriculture developed slowly around the "little bays."

The property that is now Holts Landing State Park has a long recorded history as a small family farm. The Holt family maintained a farm with a Bayshore boat landing on the site until 1957, when the property was sold to the state highway department. Then, in 1965, the first parcel of land was transferred to the State Park Commission, forming Holts Landing State Park.

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